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Illustration by Ralph Carlyle Prather

## Christmas Gift

By Mary Agnes Jackman

**D**AVID ORDE ran by the side of the bough-laden sleigh, his hand resting lightly on Shag's collar. The dog, a great grey brute, pulled strongly in his harness, head low, feet braced for the climb, lifting his brown eyes now and again affectionately to his young master's face, watching expectantly for that usual quick pat of commendation, that well-earned word of approval. It failed to come. The boy plodded along, absorbed in thought, withdrawn, working to a decision. "I can't do it," he said aloud. "Shag, I can't! I can't!"

At the sound of his name the dog quickened his pace, and the sleigh swung around the curve into sight of their home. A small log cabin it was, with a spiral of smoke ascending into the still, cold air, incense to the god of winter; at one end of the building there was piled a mound of sticks and small logs. It was David's task, with Shag to help him, to cut and haul wood from the surrounding timber to supply fuel for the fire that needed constant replenishment. He took off the load of dry boughs, and slipped

the harness from the dog. Then he knelt in the snow, put his arms around Shag, and pressed him hard against his body. "I've got to do it," he muttered. "I've just got to do it. You'll understand, won't you, old fellow?"

They went into the cabin together, the boy stamping snow from moccasined feet. His mother, mending by the west window, looked up with a smile on her sweet, sad face. "Well, son?" she greeted him in a quiet, modulated voice.

"Well, Mother!" the lad replied. "Another load in. How is Patsy now?"

"Better," said Mrs. Orde. "On the road to well-dom, I think. She's asleep, just now. She fell asleep, talking of Santa."

"I know," said David. "She thinks of nothing but a doll with opening and shutting eyes, as she calls it. I promised her —"

"Your father always made so much of Christmas," said Mrs. Orde, stitching rapidly in spite of blurring eyes. "And

now he's gone — and a fourteen-year-old boy, even the dearest and best boy in the world, can't be expected to fend for us like a man — and our baby Patsy ill so long — David, I've thought and thought. There just isn't anything for Christmas."

"Yes, there is, Mother. There is a way," David stood behind his mother's chair, dropped his arms about her shoulders. "Patsy's going to have her Christmas, doll and everything."

"David! How —? What —?"

"I've had an offer to sell Shag."

"But you couldn't David. You couldn't sell Shag. You've had him since he was a wee pup. You love him so. He's all you have —"

"I've got you and Patsy," said David, biting his lips. "And I promised Patsy that if she'd only get well, Santa Claus would surely come —"

"Tell me, dear, about this offer."

"There was a man came in today to Wood Bay. He's on his way to Moose River, but there's no train out there this week, and he wants to get there before Christmas. He thinks the best way is to take a dog team overland. He could sell



the dogs there to men outfitting for the gold fields. He saw Shag working. He wants him for a lead dog; he's so well trained. He's so strong, Shag is, — part husky, so the man tells me. There's a ten-dollar bill waiting for me in Wood Bay. I could bring home the doll and fixin's —"

"David, — Wait! Think! He's your dog, and you must make the decision. But he's never known any master but you, and only kindness all his life. With strangers he may be abused — half starved, half frozen, beaten with whips —"

"Mother!" cried David sharply. "Do you think I haven't thought of it? Do you think it's easy? My best chum —"

A little querulous voice floated out from the bedroom. "David, I hear you. Come tell Patsy about Christmas."

David lifted the frail form tenderly, and bunched the pillows to a comfortable nest behind the golden head. "Just two days now till Santa will be saying — I must be getting off to visit that good little Patricia Orde."

"With reindeer and jingly bells?"

"You'll hear the jingly bells, Patsy."

"And a really truly doll baby to sleep beside me on the pillow?"

"Surest thing you know. I'll go right now and send word to Santa to be sure to put a really-truly doll in his pack. And oranges — and a gold ring. Just you wait, sweet baby."

The child relaxed with a happy sigh. David put on his cap and mittens; Shag, alert, following his movements, stood at attention.

"Well, Mother?" said David, a twisted smile on his face.

"Well, David," she replied, simply. "God bless you, son."

David and Shag went down the hill.

There were mysterious parcels and boxes hidden that evening on the lowest shelf of the corner cupboard, and David, at last, with a determinedly cheerful whistle on his plucky lips, climbed the ladder to his bed under the rafters. He lay very still, face down into his pillow, trying to shut out the feel of emptiness that pervaded the cabin, trying to still the ache for the four-footed friend he had betrayed.

The wind rose in the night, shrieking maledictions above the head of the sleepless boy; in the morning a full-fledged blizzard raked the country with cruel, smothering wings. But David knew where there was an evergreen that he could come at with safety; he fought his way to it through the storm, and brought back the top for a Christmas tree. Patsy was fretful and troubled. Again and again, they had to assure the feverish child that Santa Claus could make his way to her in spite of the blizzard; that he wouldn't be frozen or lost in the snow.

The few hours of daylight passed.

## The Reason

By CLAIRE BOYLE BRACKEN

Christmas is the nicest season  
All the bright year through;  
I think I know the reason,  
Perhaps you've guessed it too,  
Giving happiness to others,  
Brings happiness to you.

Patsy, in blissful anticipation, fell asleep early. David brought in the tree, and placed it so that it would greet his little sister's eyes the first thing when she awakened in the morning.

Mrs. Orde put a tall lighted candle in the window to the East. It was Christmas Eve.

"Didn't you get anything for yourself, David?" she enquired as she unwrapped the parcels.

"For myself? With blood money for Shag? Oh, I couldn't." Instantly he regretted the tone of his speech. "There was nothing I wanted, Mother dear, truly and truly. There was nothing I wanted; that's why."

They worked for hours to make the tree a thing of beauty. There was a silk cloak to make for the queenly Geraldine doll from scraps in the piece bag; there were cranberries and popcorn to be strung into shining ropes; there was a tinsel silver star for David to labor over and place on the topmost branch.

"What can I do next, Mother?" David would say. "Isn't there something else to be done?" A fellow didn't need to think when his hands were occupied.

It was nearing midnight. The tall red candle had burned squat and low, guttered by rivulets of grease. And into the night a new sound penetrated, above their whispered conversation, above the howling of the wind, the flailing of the storm, — like little bells; like little tinkling bells; like the sound of something moving through the drifted snow, like the sound of padding feet.

"Shag?" breathed David, incredulously. "Shag?" Gaudy bits of colored paper scattered in a rainbow shower as he flung himself towards the door. "Shag! Come home!" His voice rang out into the night. The great dog, with a final effort, drooping with exhaustion, pulled into the light a burdened sleigh.

"It's the man," David exclaimed; "the man who bought Shag, who was going to Moose River."

They got him into the house.

"Are you all right?" Mrs. Orde inquired anxiously, helping him out of his many wrappings. "Not frozen?"

"Better'n I deserve to be," said the old man, gruffly. "A silly old greenhorn trying to make a fifty-mile trip with a single dog. He was all I could get, and I was plumb set on going. Course I got lost in the blizzard, went round and round till I didn't know north from south nor my right hand from my left. If it hadn't

been for your dog, laddie — well, when I got completely dumflummoxed I said to him — 'Go home, Shag. Home to David.' Shag put his head down against the blizzard — Well, say —" the old man repeated, clawing icicles out of his beard — "say, that dog — the heart of him — if it hadn't been for that dog —"

David unharnessed the heroic beast, working over him with might and main.

"Times I bucked the storm with him," the stranger continued, "and then again I'd have to get on the sleigh and he'd pull me. He never wavered; never stopped. When I got completely tuckered, done in, I tied myself on with a rope. I left it to Shag. The courage of him —"

A joyful voice came from the bedroom — "It is Santa Claus. It is Santa Claus. I heard the tinkling bells — Take me out, Mother."

Mrs. Orde wrapped the child in a blanket, and brought her out to the living-room. "Thank you for coming, dear Santa," she said, gravely. "David said you'd surely not forget me."

The old man accepted the Santa Claus role as to the manner born. "Go fetch me my pack, David," he sang out — "the pack off the sleigh."

"Taking in some toys to my grandchildren at Moose River," he explained in an aside to Mrs. Orde. "No, they weren't expecting me. Makes no odds now, ma'am." He shrugged aside her whispered expostulations. "I'll make other plans, later."

With the beautiful doll from the tree in her arms and gifts beyond her wildest dreams within reach, the child sat enthroned, her eyes alight with joy.

"But Santa," she reminded him, "what about David?" Haven't you anything for Davy?"

"David may have his choice of anything I've got," said the visitor. "There's a Webbley air-gun in that box; in my pocket I have a gold watch — he can choose for himself anything I possess."

David came over and faced him, holding his eye, man to man.

"You mean it? Anything you possess?"

"I said it, and I stick to it," was the answer. "Anything I possess."

"Anything? There's only one thing. Come here, Shag."

Shag rose from his mat, and staggered with an eager whine to his master. They heard his toe nails clicking on the bare floor. Then David's arms encircled the dog, and he held him tight, tight.

"But Shag is David's dog," said Patsy, in bewilderment.

"Shag is David's dog," the old man assented.

"One, two, three, — twelve," sang the clock.

"Christmas gift" — they cried in happy chorus to one another — "Christmas gift!"



## Christmas Eve in Boston

By M. Louise C. Hastings

"IT is time to get ready for a drive, Joyce," called Aunt Laura from the foot of the stairs. "We are going into Boston this evening to hear the carols on Beacon Hill. Wear your heavy coat, and take your fur gloves, because it will be cold standing outside all the evening, and you will be glad of warm clothing."

It was Christmas Eve. The weather had cleared and the stars were gradually peeping out from behind the clouds which had covered the sky all day long and which had dampened the spirits of many a person who was looking forward to an evening with the carollers. Now the night was growing cold and the air was becoming invigorating, and Mrs. Grayson felt that her niece, who had just come from the land of perpetual sunshine, would have a good opportunity to experience this delightful celebration of Christmas Eve in Boston, which was fast becoming a tradition. She knew it would be a memory-making evening for her niece, and she wanted to introduce her to her beloved city from just this angle.

It was six o'clock when they parked their car near a large hotel on Beacon Street, where they were to dine before they began wandering up and down the narrow, crooked streets of the Hill. They had not been sitting at their table long before Joyce said, "There seems to be quite a crowd of people gathering over there in the lobby of the hotel. What do you suppose has happened, Aunt Laura?"

Now Aunt Laura knew just what was happening because for two years she had witnessed a similar scene at this hotel. So she made a casual answer, not committing herself at all, and went on with her dinner.

Suddenly the sounds of "O Come, All Ye Faithful!" burst upon the air. "Oh, Aunt Laura, isn't that beautiful?" exclaimed Joyce. "May I leave you for a few minutes?" and, rising from her chair, she walked to the wide doorway.

The crowd which Joyce had noticed proved to be carollers from one of the Boston churches. These young people were beginning their evening's music by entertaining the guests of this particular hotel because of their special interest in a church member who made the hotel her home.

"It is a very beautiful introduction to Christmas Eve, Aunt Laura," said Joyce, as she resumed her seat at the dining



### The Christ Child

By HARVEY PEAKE

Who gave us this brightest, this happiest day, —  
This Christmas of civilized nation?  
The birth of a babe in a land far away,  
Whose love is the whole world's salvation.

He was meek, he was lowly, but gentle and kind,  
His mission was peace upon earth,  
But today we exalt him, in heart and in mind,  
For this is the day of his birth.

table. "I doubt if you can show me anything that will make me feel the spirit of Christmas more than this."

"I have much to show you," replied her aunt, "and when we have finished we will start our travels around one of the most unique and interesting hills that you will ever see. Just after leaving our hotel we shall pass the State House, all aglow with lights, and next to it the American Unitarian Association where our *Beacon* is published, and then we shall reach the residential district."

"Do you know," said Joyce, as they sauntered down Beacon Street, "when the carollers sang that last carol —

'God bless the master of this house  
And bless the mistress, too,  
And all the little children  
That round the table go,'

I felt as if I were a part of it all. I never felt anything quite like it. And when they ended with

'Love and joy come to you  
And to you, your wassail, too,'

and

'God bless you and send you  
A Happy New Year,'

I thought one of the carollers nodded her head directly at me! I shall never forget!"

Beacon Hill was a marvelous sight! Its streets were lined with houses four stories high, and from nearly every house, lighted candles threw their beams down upon the icy streets below. Some houses had only two tall candles at a window, others had rows on every sash, while not a few had frames which projected far back into the rooms with tiers and tiers of lighted candles. Some were the old-fashioned candles, and others were candles lighted by electricity, but the effect was the same in both cases.

Up and down the streets Joyce and her aunt wandered, watching the lights and looking into the beautifully furnished houses, for every shade was raised this Christmas Eve so that the throngs of people might view the hospitality of those keeping "open house." How Joyce enjoyed seeing the interiors with their beautiful old tapestries, pictures, and books!

"I never saw so many books," she remarked. "They seem to be everywhere. Each house seems to be filled with them! Many interesting people must live on the Hill."

"Yes," replied her aunt, "the Hill has always been a literary shrine of Boston, and has been

the home of many interesting people. Julia Ward Howe, who wrote 'The Battle Hymn of the Republic' lived here, and when she was a child she played around in different doorways. Louisa Alcott spent hard and busy years here, Francis Parkman, the historian, lived here, and many noted people have been guests of the old Hill. It would take hours for me to tell you of the literary folk who have made this Hill their home."

The crowds were gathering. There seemed to be thousands of people following the different choirs from place to place. Several Boston churches were represented on the Hill, each group of singers carrying flash lights, and music. Old Paul Revere lanterns were occasionally seen as a band of singers passed from street to street. The thrill of the unusual was in the air, and the old carols resounding through the darkness, from first one choir and then another, gave a reverential atmosphere which was everywhere apparent. The crowds were always quiet, and appreciative of the music, and occasionally someone would slip away from the crowd and join in the singing, at some door. Most of the choirs had special places where they sang, often at the door of some church member, or where there was a shut-in, or invalid.



It proved a delightful part of the evening's experience to call on a friend of Mrs. Grayson's, who was keeping open house, and, needless to say, the salads and cakes and coffee added to the joy of the occasion.

"It has been a wonderful evening, Aunt Laura," said Joyce, as they walked across the Common to view the huge community Christmas tree.

"There is just one more thing I want you to do," responded her aunt. "Let's go to King's Chapel for the candle-light service. It is a very appropriate ending to the night before Christmas, and it will give us much to think about long after the service is over."

"Aunt Laura," said Joyce, dreamily, as they were driving home, "you have given me one of the most wonderful experiences of my life. I shall never forget tonight as long as I live, and I thank you!"

## Christmas Tree Avenue

By Geneva A. Cowan

SEVERAL clear-eyed Boy Scouts, directing traffic, stand at the intersection of two streets where a line of machines extending as far as the eye can see in the evening duskiess and headed in one direction, turns a corner and starts down a slightly declining street. As the corner is reached, many exclamations of delight can be heard, and as one glances down the street, he sees the reason for the gasps. On either side of the street are thousands of colored electric lights which sweep as low as the ground and rise scores of feet into the air. Hazarding a guess as to what this unusual sight could possibly be, one might say it was a street with a hundred or so brilliantly-illuminated skyscraper buildings on both sides.

In reality, it is Santa Rosa Avenue in Altadena, California, on Christmas Eve. Picture, if you can, the magical sight of two hundred living Christmas trees, eighty feet high, strung with thousands of beautiful colored lights! At any season of the year, it is an impressive street and is visited by all Pasadena tourists, but on Christmas Eve it becomes a street which, like Cinderella, having been touched by a magic wand, presents a scene of twinkling loveliness. A drive down Christmas Tree Avenue during the holidays is as important to children of this locality as giving presents or making Christmas calls.

But the story really started fifty years ago for at that time a certain Captain Frederick J. Woodbury, of California, was traveling in India. When he saw the Himalayan deodara cedar trees of that country, also called "trees of God," he was so impressed by their beauty and majesty that upon returning to his home, he carried with him cones bearing seeds of the trees. He and his sons carefully

prepared a seed bed for them and three years later when the trees were two feet high, they were set out by Thomas L. Hoag, foreman of Captain Woodbury's nine-hundred-acre ranch. The place selected for the planting of the trees was the private drive which led up to the Woodbury residence. As the Captain observed them, he remarked: "Some time, this little hill-climbing road will become a main artery of travel and these will bring joy to all who pass along the way." The words have come true, for the "little road" is now a part of Altadena, an exclusive residential section, several miles north of Pasadena.

A certain wise and far-sighted citizen conceived the idea of "dressing-up" the trees at Christmas time for the enjoyment of all who cared to view them. So in 1920, the Kiwanis Club sponsored the idea and illuminated only a few of the trees to see how the plan would be received. The delight of the public was so genuine that the next year the City of

necessitates the services of a corps of officers assisted by hundreds of Boy Scouts. All traffic travels down the Avenue, two abreast, lights dimmed. On New Year's Eve, the crowds visit the trees until midnight and it is said that on this last night the largest number of visitors pay tribute to the beauty of the trees.

## Trees Are Like People

By FRANCES HALL

Trees are like people. Some are shy,  
Some flaunt gay colors to the sky;  
Some gossip in each passing breeze,  
Some give to wanderers a place of ease;  
Some lift brave faces to the rain,  
Some bow and mournfully complain;  
Some wither when the springtime pales,  
Some staunchly stand in wintry gales;  
Some shout glad songs to Mother Earth,  
Some ask of her to point of dearth.

Folks are like trees. . . . God help me be  
Like some kind, sheltering, friendly tree.



SANTA ROSA AVENUE, ALTADENA, CALIFORNIA

Pasadena offered to wire the trees and install the lights while the Edison Company agreed to supply the electricity. Each year, henceforth, the number of lights and the number of illuminated trees have increased. Red is the color of one-third of the 6,000 globes, while green and white constitute the remaining two-thirds. Each tree has three strings of lights, 25 globes on each. More than 20,000 feet of wire are required to wire the trees.

At seven o'clock on Christmas Eve the lights are switched on, a short program including band music, Christmas carols, and addresses is given. During the following week from five until ten o'clock, the street is illuminated, while nightly more than ten thousand automobiles slowly make their way through the avenue of living Christmas trees, delighted spectators peering out of their cars. The volume of traffic on Santa Rosa Avenue and adjacent streets during this time

## Christmas In Other Climes

By JANE ELLIS JOY

A Christmas gift in Ecuador  
Or Paraguay is not  
A pair of skates or coat of fur;  
Down there the climate's hot.

The Christmas trees in Paraguay,  
Supported by their roots,  
Bedeck themselves in blossoms gay,  
Or luscious summer fruits.

In Argentine the Christmas day  
Is long and bright and sunny,  
There Santa pictured in a sleigh  
Would be considered funny.

But, happily, in every zone  
In lands remote or near,  
The Christ-child love is felt and shown  
By kindly deeds each year.



## Working for St. Nicholas

By Merritt L. Allen

THE sun had not yet had time to dispel the fog banks which clung to the shore line of the Gulf of Mexico. A dozen sea gulls were lined up on a railing on the pier, and the pelicans had sought for and had found their perches on barnacle-encrusted pilings. They were like a small army waiting for the mist to disappear so that they could make their charge upon the water for finny tid-bits. Somewhere in the enveloping mist, a motor boat's muffled "phut-phut" could be heard.

The motor boat, *Quest*, carried two boys, Starr and Floyd Prentiss. They were after their annual supply of mistletoe, and a Christmas tree. It was about time, for the twenty-fifth was only two days away.

Starr turned the steering wheel slightly. "Well, Floyd, this will be our first Christmas in Florida. It doesn't seem real with no sleighbells, logs crackling in the fireplace, nor the earth covered with a white blanket of snow."

Floyd shook his head. "Oh well, we are going to have a snow-ball fight up in the park."

Starr grinned. "Yes, but the snow won't come from the skies. The ice companies will furnish that down here."

"We'll have to use our imaginations," remarked Floyd. "But there's one thing we shall have that our friends up north only see on the Fourth of July — Fireworks! They're going to have fireworks Christmas night, and we'll have firecrackers in our stockings."

By this time the sun's rays had pierced through the fog and the banks were slowly disappearing. The boys caught occasional glimpses of the surf rolling up on the white sandy beaches. Clumps of palmettos grew close to the water's edge and stood out vividly against the skyline. Starr broke the silence. "I was reading that the true Christmas is marked by ripening fruit, palm trees, and flowers. The book said that the slopes of Olivet waved green with wheat when Mary and Joseph stopped in Bethlehem that first Christmas night. It must have been somewhat as it is here."

"I read that same book. It said that the shepherds felt the briny breezes from the seas of the Holy Land, and they inhaled the scent of spices, incense, and blossoming orange trees."

"There's the mouth of Porpoise Bayou!" Starr exclaimed. "Bud said that we would find plenty of mistletoe up there, and good pine trees."

"Oh, we're going to have a real Christmas after all." Floyd sighed contentedly. "There's plenty of holly around here to make wreaths out of and we can use red poinsettias instead of red ribbon. . . . We must be sure to go in swimming at the beach so that we can write to our friends up north and tell them that we were in bathing on Christmas Day."

The bow of the *Quest* turned into the

bayou. White cranes, startled, left their feeding grounds in the shallow water and flapped away. A red line of fiddlers marked the water's edge. The fog had disappeared completely and King Sol shone down upon the water, causing each ripple to sparkle like a handful of gems, or turning the still water into a dozen shades of green. The *Quest* came abreast of a dilapidated house boat. All about it were drying racks heavily hung with nets. A boy stood on a runboard mending one of these.

Starr jerked his head shoreward. "That's Jed Ripa whom all the boys in school dislike. I guess it's because he's so poor and wears such frightful clothes. Poor fellow! He lives here with his uncle."

"Let's swing in and talk to him. What do you say?"

Starr answered by shutting off his engine and turning the bow of their motor boat toward the drying racks.

"Hello, Jed!" Starr called.

Jed looked up with a slight scowl between his eyes. He mistrusted all boys, for they poked so much fun at him. He did not return Starr's greeting.

"Coming in to the snow-ball fight on Christmas Day?" asked Floyd.

This time Jed answered, but there was a bitter note in his voice. "Fine chance I have. Christmas is like any other day for me. Mend nets and then go out with my uncle to make his hauls."

"That's tough!" Starr replied. "I wonder if you'd mind if Floyd, here, and myself came out to spend a day with you? We'd do our share of the work, then we could take a little trip somewhere in our motor boat."

This time Jed's face lighted up. "When would you like to come?"

Starr thought for a moment. "Oh, any day after Christmas, during our holiday. — Going to hang up your stocking?"

The cloud settled on Jed's face again. "The only thing I'll get will be in the nets we haul in."

Floyd entered the conversation. "Well, we'll see you soon. We're after a tree and some mistletoe."

Jed waved his hand to the boys as the *Quest* worked its way out into the bayou.

Floyd turned to Starr. "What ever possessed you to invite yourself up here for a day?"

Starr grinned. "Don't you think it will be fun?"

"Y-e-s," replied Floyd uncertainly.

The boys found a small shapely pine, cut it down, and lugged it to their motor boat. Next they worked their way carefully along the edge of a swamp to pull the mistletoe from the trees.

"Do you know why the mistletoe grows on trees as a parasite, Floyd?"

Floyd shook his head. "I guess I've read about it once or twice, but I've forgotten. — Why does it?"

"It's Scandinavian mythology. It appears that a hero named Balder was killed by a mistletoe arrow. The gods were very angry and decreed that the mistletoe should never again work evil so long as it did not touch the earth. That's the reason it's never on the ground. We suspend it from the ceilings and brackets in our homes as an emblem of peace."

"That's a good story. I remember it now," Floyd replied. "We've got oodles. Let's get back home."

Their return trip was uneventful. Jed had evidently left with his uncle, for he was nowhere about the houseboat, and their fishing boats were gone. As the *Quest* slid through the mouth of the bayou and edged out into the Gulf, the boys saw the boats far up the coast. Back home, the boys busied themselves by setting up the tree in a pail of sand, and trimming it with tinsels and colored candles. Next, they hung the mistletoe from the tops of the doorways and the electric light fixtures. After a while they started a small fire in the fireplace in spite of the fact that it was warm enough without it. But it was cheerful and it made them think of their friends in the north. They were silent for some time. Floyd lounged in an easy chair and gazed into the fire. Starr picked up a paper and read a Christmas article. He looked up, after a time, and turned to his brother.

"They sure have some funny things to eat, Christmas day, in different parts of the world. England has its plum pudding or 'plum porridge' as they call it. It says here that the serving of that and mince pie are said to symbolize the rich offerings made to the infant Saviour by the Wise Men. — Spain serves a soup made of sweet almonds and cream."

Floyd began to chuckle. "Does it say that Jiggs will have a bucket-full of corned beef and cabbage?"

Starr laughed with his brother over his reference to the comic strips. He referred again to the article. "It says here that eels baked and rolled in laurel leaves are a favorite dish in Italy."

Floyd propped his elbows on his knees and his chin in the palms of his hands. He asked his brother a question as he gazed at the tongues of flame. "I wonder what Jed will have for his Christmas dinner?"

Starr dropped the paper. "I'll bet he doesn't get much; same as any other day. Poor fellow!"

Floyd did not answer, so Starr picked up his paper again. "Say, Floyd, do you know who Santa Claus is?"

"Yes, St. Nicholas."

"That's right. Santa Claus is a Dutch corruption of the name St. Nicholas. Listen to this: 'St. Nicholas is known as the children's patron saint. He was a bishop in the year 300. He was famous



for his kindness to children. One night, so the story goes, wishing to help a nobleman who was so poor that he had no money for his daughter's dowry, the good bishop looked in the old man's window and saw him asleep by the fire. Climbing to the roof, he dropped a gold piece down the chimney, thinking it would fall on the hearth. But it fell instead in one of the old gentleman's stockings, which his daughter had hung up to dry. This is believed to have started the custom of hanging up stockings Christmas Eve; also the legend of Santa coming down the chimney . . . Isn't that a good story?"

Floyd nodded. "I guess we will have everything; turkey and dressing, pumpkin pie, fruit cake, sweet potatoes and all the fixings. I know Father has a load of presents for us. He always has."

Starr chuckled. "You've got something whirling over your head, Floyd. I can tell by the tone of your voice."

Floyd arose to his feet and stood over his brother. "I have. We will get everything and Jed Rippa will get nothing. I suggest that we pack a basket of good things to eat, get a Christmas tree, and take them over to the houseboat and trim up the place while Jed is out fishing with his uncle. How does that strike you?"

## The Christmas House

By Christine Gordon Wheeler

REDMOND HERRICK felt that a visit to the Christmas House was the greatest of all pleasures. That was the name which he had given to the home of his playmates' grandparents, Jean and Alfred Webster. The Christmas House stood on a street on the other side of the town from the home of Redmond and that of the Webster family. Sometimes, on Saturdays, Redmond was permitted to go with Alfred to visit his grandparents.

"We will take Redmond with us to my mother's," invited Mrs. Webster, when she called on Christmas Eve. She had just heard that ill news had reached Mrs. Herrick. She had found Redmond's mother reading a telegram asking her to go to her brother's home as he was seriously ill. Redmond's disappointment at the prospect of being without his parents for the festival had been keen; for his father planned to go with his mother. The boy's look of regret grew less when Mrs. Webster said that he could go with his friends. He had always secretly longed to spend Christmas at the Christmas House.

"Jack Frost has been here with his best magic wand to decorate the trees," remarked Alfred when the three youngsters started to go up the steps. Small fir trees grew beside them, one on each side. Those trees formed one of two reasons for the name which Redmond had

Starr had arisen while his brother was talking and now he put his arm around Floyd's shoulders. "My idea, exactly. It's about time we started working for St. Nicholas. Let's see — we ought to have some presents, too. We've got a lot of things that we can give up. There's a hunting knife, and my fishing rod, and —"

"Jed's about my size," Floyd interrupted his brother. "I'm going to fix him up with some clothes. Starr, let's make this a big Christmas for Jed; one that he won't be able to forget for years to come."

The boys put their hands on each others' shoulders and began to dance around and around. Finally they flopped down in their easy chairs again. They were both too much occupied with their own thoughts to talk for a time.

"Starr, I didn't know a fellow could get so much fun out of planning to do something for someone like Jed Rippa."

Starr smiled as he replied: "I suppose we do too much feasting and decorating and not enough of the real thing Christmas is intended for. Let's get down to brass tacks about our plans."

And so they planned what they would do for Jed Rippa, the fisherboy, for Christmas.

given to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Armand. The chief reason was because of an odd part of the woodwork at the end of the long porch. There was a lattice-work wall there with a window in it, shaped like a five-pointed star. That star-window could be seen from the street corners at either end of the block.

"Oh!" exclaimed Redmond, when the usual greetings had been exchanged between the host and hostess and their guests. He could not keep from using an exclamation for he found that there was a star inside, also. It was made with electric lights and put up only at Christmas-tide. The light from that star fell full upon the bright red berries of the holly, above the pictures and other objects in the room.

"I'm glad that you like it," said Mrs. Armand, the grandmother of Jean and Alfred. "Every nation once worshipped the sun, the moon, and the stars, Redmond. One nation learned, at last, to worship only the Heavenly Father who had made those great stars. The star of the East, as you will remember, guided the Wise Men to where the Infant Christ lay. That Babe was the Light of the World."

"In a manger," Alfred concluded his grandmother's story. Like every other boy and girl of the Christendom nations, he loved the Christmas story.

His grandfather moved quickly across the room and returned with three packages in his hands, one for each child.



Drawing by Heistand Miller

## The Gospel Story

By EDITH DE BLOIS LASKEY

Words that have rung through the ages,  
read them once again,  
While immemorial echoes wake in the  
souls of men.

Nothing new is so holy, nothing so sweet  
and true,  
As the simple, tender story our fathers'  
fathers knew.

Angel song by the manger, Magi travel-  
ing far,  
Shepherds awed and wistful, led by the  
blessed star.

Still we listen in silence, eyes uplifted  
from earth,  
Hearts a-melt in our bosoms, to the  
legend of Jesus' birth.

Guided still by the glory of that star's  
revealing ray,  
For the gift of Him we thank Thee, dear  
God, this Christmas Day.

"There is nothing more appreciated than these in Italy and in Spain! They are looked upon as much more important than Santa Claus' visit, or the beautiful Christmas Tree which looms so large with us."

"A tiny stable! Whew!" Redmond had the wrappings off his parcel first and was busy examining the small wooden sheep, cows, and oxen in the tiny stall.

"That is a souvenir which will remind you of Christmas throughout the entire year, children," said Alfred's and Jean's mother. "Grandfather likes to make those surprises to remind us that each Christmas brings us nearer to the true Christmas peace. That is one for which we must all work — to send the light of Bethlehem to all the world."

"Why did Jesus come to earth in a manger?" asked Jean, the youngest of the three, with intense surprise. She was still too young to remember the gospel story from one Christmas to another.

"The parents of Jesus had to go to Bethlehem to be numbered, something like a census, or like being enrolled for voting, you know. Joseph was born there,



and so many others came for the same reason, that there was no room in the khan. That was the home for travelers, kept by the wealthiest man of the place. Travelers chose their own places to stay, in rooms which opened on a courtyard. They brought their own food and bedding, always. They paid no money for such lodgings, for all were welcome. It was in the place kept for the animals, also brought by the travelers, that Joseph and Mary had to sleep. Little did the man who showed them where to go, know that the angels were preparing to sing the first Christmas carols of the world."

Just then, Alfred, who sang in the church choir, started a hymn very softly and everybody joined in heartily:

"O little town of Bethlehem,  
How still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep,  
The silent stars go by.

"We hear the Christmas angels  
The great glad tidings tell,  
O come to us, abide with us,  
Our Lord, Emmanuel!"

Redmond had not noticed that there was a brown curtain, much the color of the wallpaper, hanging underneath the lighted star. It was divided into a higher and a lower curtain. Mr. Armand drew aside the upper part presently. This was what they saw — the pictured stable in Bethlehem on the first Christmas Eve, and the hills where the shepherds watched their flocks and heard the angels. It was then that Alfred's mother started a song to which everybody listened with delight:

"Holy night! Peaceful night!  
Through the darkness beams a light!  
Yonder, where they sweet vigils keep  
O'er the Babe who, in silent sleep,  
Rests in Heavenly peace.

"Silent night! Holiest night!  
Darkness flies and all is light!  
Shepherds hear the angels sing,  
'Hallelujah! Hail the King!  
Jesus, the Saviour is here.'

"Silent night! Holiest night!  
Guiding star, O lend thy light!  
See the Eastern wise men bring  
Gifts and homage to our King!"

"There is no more beautiful song for Christmas than that," declared Mrs. Armand. "It makes the sacred Child seem so divine and also so human, and very, very dear. A baby is truly a 'bit of heaven,' and this Babe has captured the hearts of men, women, and children the world over, holding them loyal for two thousand years, nearly."

"Who were the wise men?" asked Redmond. He had always thought most of all about Santa Claus and his reindeer on Christmas Eve in former years.

"They are called Magi," explained Mr. Armand. "In Persia and in other lands of the East, long ago, men worshipped the sun, believing that it was a god. They worshipped fire because they had the idea that the sun had sent the fire into the trees for men. They built altars in order to worship light. A lamp burning night and day on those altars was called Mazda. Three men, the Magi, watched that light constantly. At night, those on duty studied the stars and their movements."

Drawing the curtains aside, Mr. Armand then showed a picture of a Persian temple where a single lamp burned on a pedestal. Three men sat watching it, praying as they watched the light.

"And this shall be a sign," quoted Alfred. Once more the strains of a Christmas hymn floated up the stairs led by his choir-trained voice:

"Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,  
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head,  
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay,  
The little Lord Jesus asleep in the hay."

The other half of the picture was then shown. Three men could be seen riding on camels and following the star to Bethlehem where the child from heaven had a "manger for his bed."

"They brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh," said Alfred, softly.

"What for?" asked Jean, who was doing her very best to understand the wondrous story.

"They wished to present some welcoming gifts to the Child from heaven, dear," her father explained. "The gifts, which they brought were all types of what would happen to Christ. Gold meant that He was really a king. Frankincense meant that he was really a Heavenly King, for incense means prayers. Myrrh meant that he must suffer and die. Those precious gifts were just like a prophecy."

"The gifts brought by the Magi began the custom of gift-giving at Christmas, Jean," said her mother. "It is to help us to remember this precious story that we send presents to our loved ones at Christmas."

"But we do not bring our gifts right to Jesus." There was both surprise and questioning shown in Jean's voice.

"Out of the mouths of babes comes truth," quoted Jean's grandfather. "Jean has struck the right way of it. What have we prepared to take to the church tomorrow for the Master? Many people belong to Christmas Clubs nowadays so that they may have enough money to spend on Christmas gifts. We must be stars to guide others to Bethlehem, to the Christ-way of life. In memory of those gift-bringers of that first Christmas, we'll start our own Christmas Club. It must have three parts: gold, our money; frankincense, our prayers; and myrrh, our self-denial."

Redmond was so deeply interested in the idea of that new kind of a Christmas Club that he had forgotten about stockings to be hung up. A small screen was brought in from the kitchen and set before the fireplace. It soon held a stocking for each one of the seven, Christmasing together in the Christmas House. Redmond discovered on the next morning that the stockings were well filled, too.

Breakfast followed the merry shouts of "Oh!" and "I say!" accompanying the drawing of each treasure from the stockings. It was not until the meal was over that the Christmas Tree was lighted. It stood hidden behind a screen in a corner of the Living-Room. A star was at the top of it.

"Who can tell what a Christmas Tree is?" asked Mrs. Armand.

"Something set up with all its beauty to make us think about the growing things of the earth," replied Redmond.

"Right, my boy," said his host. "It was once a Creation Tree with balls of colors to represent the stars, the sun, and the moon, and all the fruits, and creatures. Now, it is to remind us of Christ and of the Tree of Life that we have it trimmed. Well, young people, have you thought about your gifts to be taken to the church, today?"

Jean was the first to speak, and she held up one book from her pile of gifts: and as she dearly loved books, it was a great piece of self-denial to part with one.

Alfred brought a box of pencils from his store to surprise a boy who had none, or so he said.

Redmond was glad that his thoughtful aunt had sent a shining new fifty-cent coin to him: for that would buy some less fortunate boy or girl something which he or she had wanted most of all, he felt. As he walked down the steps, looking again at the snow-covered fir trees, some words from the Bible rang in his ears: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Redmond felt, suddenly that his Christmas in the Christmas House was proving the truest kind of Christmas that he had ever known.

## A Birthday Box

By MARY C. SHAW

Daddy brought me home a big box  
For my birthday, just last week,  
And set it on the kitchen floor —  
Then he gave my ear a tweak.

Pretty soon I heard some scratching  
An' a funny little whine,  
Then when we opened up the cover  
'Twas a puppy — an' it's mine.

He's so warm and white and woolly  
An' so wabbly when he walks,  
But when I call him "Billy Boy!"  
He wags his stubby tail an' talks.



# THE BEACON CLUB

## The Editor's Post Box

Writing a letter for this corner makes you a member of the Club. Address, The Beacon Club, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.

Dear B. C. Members:

The letter in our Post Box today comes as a Christmas gift to the Editor, — a nice note of appreciation which she is happy to share with all our readers. She also sends to each and all, a Merry Christmas greeting, with grateful thanks to all the boys and girls who help to make our paper interesting.

THE EDITOR.

1001 SO. OHIO AVE.,  
COLUMBUS, O.

Dear Editor: I want to tell you how much pleasure the *Beacon* paper and Club have given me. I joined the Beacon Club two years ago and since then have received many letters. I am corresponding with seventeen girls. I have nine in Massachusetts, two in Maine, two in New Hampshire, one in Vermont, one in New York, one in Minnesota, and one in England. If any other girls about sixteen years of age would like to correspond with me, I should be very glad to receive their letters.

From a Beacon member,

HERTHA LOUISE KLEIN.

## Christmas-Tree Land

By ELIZABETH C. WHERRY

When June was seven she went away out West to Washington to spend Christmas with her Cousin Ralph, up in the Cascade Mountains. Ralph's father owned a mill where huge trees were sawed into boards, and back of Ralph's home there were forests of tall fir, spruce and hemlock trees.

Up the valley and towering over the tree-tops, June could see the snow-capped mountains and she loved to watch the rosy sunset-light play upon the drifts and glaciers upon the far-away peaks.

The morning before Christmas Uncle Bob said, "We're going Christmas-tree shopping today." June had visions of riding in the funny little logging train down to the town, ten miles away and then getting into the bus to go to the big stores in Tacoma. Uncle Bob put her into a pair of Ralph's high-topped boots, her heaviest sweater and cap and away they went — Uncle Bob, Ralph, June and the big Airedale dog — to get the Christmas tree.

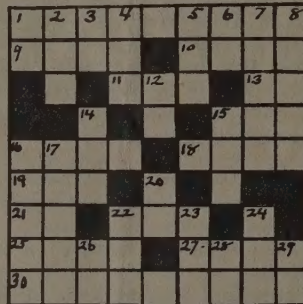
They did ride in the cab of the engine on the logging train, but they steamed

OUR PURPOSE: Helpfulness.  
OUR MOTTO: Let your light shine.  
OUR BADGE: The Beacon Club Button.

## Puzzlers

### Holly-Days and Special Days

By MARLIVE STETSON



off up the crooked little track nearer and nearer the white-peaked mountains. "The train is going up to the logging camp for a load of logs," explained Ralph.

Soon they came to a great hillside where all the big trees had been cut down. "Logged off," Ralph said. But in among the stumps were thousands and thousands of Christmas trees, feathery little green Christmas trees of many shapes and sizes. "Why, this is Christmas-tree land!" exclaimed June in delight.

The engineer stopped long enough to let his passengers off and then bumped on up the valley to get his load of logs for the mill. The Airedale led the way among the Christmas trees and June followed, sniffing the fragrant air and declaring she almost expected "to find presents under each tree."

"Choose the one you like best, June," said Uncle Bob. Each tree seemed the best but finally June decided upon a perfectly-shaped spruce, just a little taller than she was. Then she chose two little trees about twelve inches high and as like as two peas, to put upon Aunt Nell's sideboard and another one a little smaller for the centerpiece on the table.

"How's this to hang on the window curtain?" said Ralph, pulling up a long strand of feathery elk horn moss. They gathered a sackful of the graceful sprays for festoons and a basketful of Oregon grapes with their shining green leaves for wreaths.

When the logging train came back, the trees were tied on a load of logs and June and the others climbed into the cab of the engine. "I'm so glad I came to visit in Christmas-Tree Land," said June, happily, as she sniffed the fragrant hemlock branch she held in her hand.

Across:

1. A birthday.
9. Merit.
10. A carriage.
11. A baby goat.
13. A verb.
15. Something used to clean floors.
16. To encourage.
18. Things that fill the roadways.
19. A prefix.
21. Abbreviation for a State.
22. Organ of hearing.
25. Something Moses destroyed.
27. A purpose (plural).
30. Where a war began.

Down:

1. Civil engineer.
2. Something worn on the head.
3. Railroad.
4. Writing fluid.
5. Trinity College, Dublin.
6. What children call their mother.
7. A special day in April.
8. Where babies like to climb.
12. Part of verb "to be."
14. A boy's name.
15. A day celebrated in England and sometimes in America.
16. The month when Easter usually comes.
17. One who likes the wedding day.
20. Fourth note in musical scale.
22. A man that Samuel knew.
23. A piece of cloth.
24. Three-fourths of Amos.
26. A domestic animal.
28. Rhymes with "sit."
29. The symbol for tin, abbreviated.

## For You

By DAISY D. STEPHENSON

- A laughter-shaking, echo-waking, merry-making Christmas!  
A holly-wreathing, blessing-breathing, joy-bequeathing Christmas!

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